

March 4, 2016

Dear Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and other distinguished members of the Labor Committee:

My name is Anderson Curtis from New Haven, CT. I am currently working as a Recovery Support Specialist for Continuum of Care since 10/2015. Continuum employs *roughly 50 other returning citizens. Continuum saw how we could help and looked beyond the box.*

I stand in support of **HB: 5237 An Act Concerning Fair Chance Employment**. This bill would eliminate barriers to employment for individuals with a criminal record.

I was released from prison 8/17/2007. I matriculated into Gateway Community College in 9/2007. During the first 8 months after my release, I was unable to get a job; the box banned me from employment. When employers looked at my application, the felony box blinded them from seeing my true self and all the skills and talents that I have to offer. Finally, I was hired at The Quinnipiac Polling Institute in 3/2008. Quinnipiac Polling Institute saw me as a student and looked beyond the box.

In 5/2008, I earned a certificate in Addiction Counseling. Crossroads saw me working to change my life, hired me, and looked beyond the box. Crossroads employed me from 5/2008 to 7/2009. In 12/2009, I completed the requirements of my Associate's Degree. While living at the Beth-El Shelter, two shelter employees noticed me and referred me to their other job New Prospects. In March 2010, New Prospects saw my passion for recovery and hired me; they looked beyond the box. New Prospects employed me from 3/2010 to 10/2010.

Then, from 10/2010 to 9/2014, with an Associate's Degree in Addiction Counseling, recent and relevant work history, and certification as a dislocated worker, the BOX BANNED me from employment. Unemployed for FOUR YEARS, I survived on CT Unemployment and Obama's Stimulus Package from 10/2010 to 12/2012 and then I moved to North Carolina for one year.

I returned to CT in 12/2013. A friend created work for me in his insulation company. A friend who knew me for who I was, who I am, but MOST IMPORTANT, who I could be. A friend who looked beyond the box. This friend referred me to one of his customer's companies. With this reference, the company looked beyond the box and hired me. In 9/2014, another friend hired me to manage his independent living facility, where I had been living since 11/2013, and as a prep cook/pot washer at his restaurant. He knew me, hired me, and looked beyond the box. I remained employed at this restaurant until I got my current position at Continuum of Care.

Sometimes passion can get you in the door. Nevertheless, IN MY EXPERIENCE ONLY PROPER SELF-CARE EMPOWERED ME TO PERSIST THRU MY STRUGGLES.

This Bill is very near and dear to my heart. I am where I am and who I am simply because of relationships that are near and dear to my heart. I was able to find employment from people who knew me or companies who were willing to look beyond the box, but there were many jobs that I could not access, jobs that screen employees based on their criminal records. Because I was unable to access many jobs, I

have experienced long periods of unemployment which limited my ability to contribute to my community. This Bill to ban the box will allow returning citizens the opportunity to be interviewed by potential employers, who can HOPEFULLY LOOK BEYOND THE BOX to consider the whole person!

I support Fair Chance Employment and hope the committee will vote favorably on HB 5237.

Thank you for your time,
Anderson Curtis